

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

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1.0 Introduction

The South Lakeland District is 600 square miles of varied landscape, mostly rural, includes two National Park Authorities (Lake District and Yorkshire Dales) and one area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Arnside and Silverdale). Whilst surrounded by rolling hills, mountains, lakes and countryside, good quality green spaces are used by our communities on a daily basis and are an important feature of South Lakeland. The benefits include healthier lifestyles, community cohesiveness, a vibrant economy, an attractive place to live and work and well-used parks, open spaces and playgrounds. Our parks and open spaces also form much of the council's green infrastructure network, benefits include biodiversity, corridors, trees and vegetation which absorb carbon and delivery of key elements of the council's active travel network.

The council's vision is 'Working together to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore'. Parks and open spaces play an important role in delivering our vision in all areas of the council plan. This strategy outlines the council's ambition for its parks and open spaces, outlining ways of working with our grounds maintenance contractor, community and partnerships to deliver high quality maintenance and improvements which ensure our spaces are inclusive and accessible for all.

Supported by key documents, including parks, woodland and cemetery management plans and a play audit which provide vision and practical actions for ongoing maintenance and development. Each plan has been developed with our partners and community and will be delivered through the grounds maintenance partnership combined with community involvement.

This parks and open spaces strategy will be delivered in a number of different ways. The grounds maintenance partnership will deliver all aspects of day-to-day maintenance. Working with Town and Parish Councils meeting local priorities and on individual parks engaging with our community groups and partners. This strategy will also meet the delivery of the corporate agendas of the Green Team, Cumbria Public Health Strategy and Active Travel.

In addition to the above, this strategy provides a sustainable future for our parks and open spaces as valuable council assets through maintenance, new ways of working through the Customer Connect programme, the development of new partners and the exploration of commercial opportunities. Over the next 10 years this strategy will ensure our open spaces continue to perform, meet community needs, deliver council values and be resilient to change.

The final section of this strategy is an Action Plan with smart objectives to deliver the strategy over a ten year period.

Over the next ten years there may be significant change to how grounds maintenance and council services are delivered. Therefore the strategy will be reviewed regularly, a simpler

and factual review on an annual basis, with a deeper review following the completion of the current grounds maintenance contract on 31 March 2024.

2.0 Our vision and key themes

The vision for our parks and open spaces is:

“Working together to create valued and sustainable parks and open spaces throughout South Lakeland”

The three key themes of the parks and open spaces strategy have been identified to align with the council priorities, which are as follows:

- Housing and communities - high quality parks where people meet and communities thrive
- Health and environment – protecting and enhancing our place, Improving wellbeing
- Economy and culture – enabling and delivering opportunities for sustainable economic growth

3.0 Our green spaces

Parks and open spaces refers to areas of public parks or areas of land used for recreation. Our portfolio of green spaces is made up of 13 principal parks, 11 community parks, 61 children’s playgrounds, eight multi use games areas (MUGAs), eight cemeteries and 15 woodlands. Management plans have been created for all principal parks, community parks, cemeteries and woodlands across South Lakeland, a table summarising these can be found in appendix 1.

The authority’s parks and open spaces have been categorised as follows:

Principal parks

These are parks that SLDC have identified as sites of regional importance and provide a range of facilities and visitor attractions. These are parks to travel to and spend time on, attracting visitors from outside the district and can often be used to host large events. These parks often include a variety of distinctive features which range from areas of historic interest to impressive play spaces and Lakeland views which are used by both local residents and visitors. Examples of principal parks include Kendal Castle in Kendal, Rothay Park in Ambleside and Bowness Promenade in Bowness on Windermere.

Community parks

These are parks and green spaces of importance to local residents where community events and activities are held. These tend to be areas which provide local green space for the nearby residents or play facilities for local children. Examples of community parks are

Fletcher Park in Kendal, Rinkfield in Kendal, Baddeley Clock in Windermere and Jubilee Gardens in Ulverston.

Trees and woodlands

South Lakeland District Council has 13 significant woodlands and two smaller areas of woodland. The woodlands provide a diverse habitat for wildlife and recreation space and are highly valued by the local communities that use them.

In addition to woodlands, SLDC have stand-alone trees in our parks and open spaces. These principal landscape features provide focal points and wildlife habitats many of which are longstanding features of historic significance.

Finally, SLDC have a number of street trees located on housing estates which provide amenity value, mitigate landscape impact and provide interest.

Cemeteries

There are eight council owned and managed cemeteries of which seven are open for burials and cremated remains within South Lakeland as well as 14 closed cemeteries. Due to their sensitive nature, it is important that all the cemeteries are maintained to a uniform high

standard to provide peace and comfort to those who come to visit. Cemeteries are also a valuable green space providing biodiversity through wild flowers and mature tree species, they also enhance many “green corridors” linking other green spaces.

Playgrounds

There are 61 playgrounds, eight multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and three skate parks. The playgrounds range from destination playgrounds designed for ages 16 and under, offering a large range of equipment for all abilities, people will travel specifically to these parks for the enjoyment of the playground, to neighbourhood playgrounds designed for a specific age range, with users living within walking distance of the playground and toddler playgrounds for under-fives.

A play audit was completed in 2016, the audit was fundamental in creating a capital improvement programme for play and with member support a capital funding contribution is now in place for five years. The model of playground improvements using the SLDC minimum standard is to work closely with community groups to support and facilitate their ambitions for the site’s development and improvement.

Sports and recreation

SLDC have nine football pitches across the district which are hired by the local football teams and maintained by SLDC’s grounds maintenance contractor, Continental Landscapes Ltd (CLL). Bookings are managed by our leisure partner

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) and we also work closely with Westmorland Football Association.

A number of our parks also facilitate bowls, tennis and cricket, these are predominantly leased to the clubs through the council's property manager Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) and the local clubs manage and maintain them. GLL provide crazy golf, mini golf, pitch and putt, foot golf, a chipping range and three tennis courts at the Glebe, Bowness-on-Windermere, one of our principal open spaces and a very popular tourist destination.

Finally, we have three stand-alone outdoor gym equipment areas. Outdoor gyms provide the opportunity for varied exercise to be enjoyed as part of a walk or run aimed at ages 16 and over, these are popular with all generations often working out together.

The parks and open spaces strategy does not include:

- Council-owned land used for grazing – these open spaces have value as amenity green space in that they generally provide visual interest and a sense of open space but are not accessible by the public
- Grass verges – although verges provide green corridors for wildlife and serve to visually enhance journeys, they are of limited value to the public
- Parks and open spaces owned and managed by Town and Parish Councils

4.0 Park management plans

Management plans have been created for all South Lakeland's principal parks, community parks and cemeteries, some of the community sites have been grouped together by area

To develop the management plans we have worked closely with our partners and community to ensure the importance of each space is captured and that actions are agreed, are relevant and achievable.

The management plans are designed to provide a vision and prioritise a list of actions for each individual park to be agreed and signed off by the relevant partners/community group. The plans aim to enhance and add value in a sustainable and long lasting way to the parks, ensuring they remain well maintained and well used.

Management plans are working documents and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, aims and actions are likely to change as community engagement for each of the parks has been completed. Community ownership is key to the delivery of the management plans and will play an important role in the prioritisation of delivering individual park improvements. The management plans are a key element of the successful implementation of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, an overview can be found in appendix 1.

5.0 Cemetery management

The cemetery management plan and subsequent action plan will include a review of remaining space available, estimated length of time until full and options

available to the individual cemetery to continue service delivery. This will be reviewed annually and used to update Corporate Management Team on availability across the district. An overview can be found in appendix 1.

6.0 Tree and woodland management

We recognise the benefit trees provide visually, environmentally and from a biodiversity perspective, and their value in combatting rising CO2 levels, and the lasting benefits they provide to our communities and businesses. We manage our woodlands and trees with great care and will always seek to replace any trees that have to be removed with more, using the support of our communities and local partners. Our trees are regularly inspected for safety and a work programme is developed from these inspections.

Management Plans for all SLDC woodlands have been produced by Cumbria Woodlands in partnership with our Arboricultural Officer. An overview of the tree management policy can be found in appendix 2.

7.0 Grounds maintenance

All day to day grounds maintenance activities are completed by our contractor Continental Landscapes Ltd. the contract is managed by the Grounds Maintenance Partnership, which is made up of officers and senior managers from both SLDC and CLL. The partnership meets on a quarterly basis, has a business plan, action plan monitoring the 11 KPIs of the grounds maintenance contract.

The existing grounds maintenance contract was awarded to CLL in 2010 for a seven year period and was extended in 2017 for a further seven years, which will complete on 31 March 2024. CLL are a long-term partner who have delivered grounds maintenance services for the council since the early 1990s.

In 2010, 32 staff in summer and 16 in winter completed grounds maintenance activities, however, over the course of the contract with ongoing issues recruiting and retaining seasonal staff, this has changed to 19 full time staff and six seasonal staff.

Predominant grounds maintenance activities include grass cutting, litter collection and cemetery duties, 11 key performance indicators monitor the performance of the contract and include items such as works completed on time, quality of works, resources available and response to queries.

When the current contract expires, the Grounds Maintenance Partnership combined with a review of this strategy will provide direction, information and key decisions on how the council decides when and how the new contract is compiled and advertised.

8.0 Enjoying our green spaces

Our parks and open spaces are valuable and well loved by the local communities. Public Health England studies have found that good quality green spaces can affect how people feel, reduce stress and sadness, lift the mood and make us feel better therefore, parks and open spaces are fundamental for the health and wellbeing of the public.

Furthermore, our green spaces are a platform for a wide range of community events and activities such as after school clubs, fitness and gardening clubs. All are activities that bring people together, enhance the economy and allow green spaces to be utilised and enjoyed by all.

Health and environment

Public health is at the forefront of the council plan, SLDC has worked with all Cumbrian District Councils and Cumbria County Council to write and approve the Joint Cumbria Public Health Strategy.

The vision of the Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy is to “enable Cumbrian Communities to be healthy and to tackle health inequalities”. The focus is on the wider determinants of health, which are the factors which influence health. The first aim in the Public Health Strategy is “improving the quality of and access to green spaces”. The delivery of this strategy and high quality, well used green spaces is key to this.

The council also works closely with our leisure provider to deliver initiatives which encourage the public to get active an example being “heathy mile” on the Glebe, Bowness to get people out walking and the adapted bikes programme to enable people of all abilities to enjoy our parks and open spaces on wheels.

The council also recognises the role of its open spaces as part of its green infrastructure network and, where practical and appropriate, manages its open spaces to enhance their biodiversity value, create habitats, new tree planting and the creation of wet areas.

Culture, arts and events

From sporting to cultural events, festivals, films, fundraising, promotional, fetes, and fairs our principal parks, community parks and open spaces are used as outdoor venues hosting a wide range of events and cultural activities throughout the district from small scale community initiatives to large scale cultural events of regional and national importance.

The council works proactively to bring about significant, unique, one off events and cultural initiatives to the district taking an enabling and facilitating approach to the use of our parks and opens spaces to showcase and promote South Lakeland.

We value and encourage partnership work and work with the council’s key partners to promote our land to be used for cultural projects and commissions for temporary public art installations and for filming locations.

The potential of our parks and open spaces for culture, arts and events is recognised and the council has an ambition to work with partners to encourage and develop more opportunities for the promotion of events and cultural initiatives on our parks and open spaces.

Partnerships

Partnerships are key to adding value, raising funds, delivering improved services and making sustainable improvements to our parks and open spaces. The council has worked with Town and Parish Councils, community groups and volunteers to deliver a range of improvements to both principal parks and community spaces, examples of these are drainage improvements and footpath works at Nobles Rest, Kendal, playground improvements at Oxenholme, Kendal and overall park improvements at Lightburn Park, Ulverston, the case studies of these can be found later in this strategy.

With improvements to our parks and planting and the development of key partnerships we hope to attract investment and develop a sponsorship and partnership programme to continue to invest in and improve our parks and open spaces.

Advice to town and parish councils

The parks and open spaces team offer a range of support and advice to town and parish councils, we offer advice and support on subjects such as:

- Play – advice and support on playground inspections, how to improve a play space, the steps of our procurement process and funding strategies
- Ground maintenance – offer support and advice with managing and maintaining open spaces e.g. litter bin emptying, mowing, hedge cutting etc.
- Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) – renewing and introducing dog orders or alcohol restriction on open spaces

9.0 Key themes

Economy and culture

“Enabling and delivering opportunities for sustainable economic opportunities through parks and assets”

South Lakeland District Council will achieve this by working with community groups, volunteers and the private sector to:

- Strengthen partnerships with community groups and stakeholders
- Create an attractive environment for investment
- Maximise external funding opportunities through funding partnerships and grant applications

- Identify sustainable income-generating opportunities
- Implement volunteer sessions
- Development of sponsorship and partnership opportunities
- Promote events in parks to enhance visitor experience
- Use our open spaces as a platform for community activity and events

Case study: Rothay Park – boosting tourism by improving visitor experience

Rothay Park is a large park located in Ambleside, a popular town at the heart of the Lake District National Park. Rothay Park is susceptible to flooding and during Storm Desmond in 2015 the playground was seriously damaged by the flood water.

Following the devastating floods, the authority secured funding to relocate and improve the playground within the park. After consultation with the local primary school, the Parish Council and park users a new playground was designed and installed and has now turned Rothay Park into a popular destination park with families travelling from neighbouring towns and villages to use the playground and adjacent open space.

The success of the development in Rothay Park is evident through the feedback we receive from other park consultations, with more people travelling to use the park this has had a positive impact on the local economy.

With over 18 million visitors coming to South Lakeland annually, many thousands benefit from our open spaces. The growth in numbers visiting and using facilities at Rothay Park has resulted in the Parish Council in partnership with SLDC, developing plans to upgrade the toilet facilities and introduce income-generating café facilities on the park.

Health and environment

“Protecting and enhancing our environment”

Environment

- Create and implement management plans for individual parks, cemeteries and woodlands, taking into account existing knowledge and partnerships
- Manage parks, cemeteries and woodlands to enhance and improve biodiversity
- Work with SLDC’s Green Team to improve resilience to climate change
- Promote safe links between separate green spaces by welcoming opportunities to develop green corridors and underused parks
- Protect and promote trees and woodlands

Health

- Promote health and activity in our parks for improved wellbeing and mental health
- Encourage diversity and inclusion
- Contribute to the creation of healthy places

- Improve physical and social inclusion, including accessibility
- Create and encourage healthy walks/cycle routes linking green spaces and gym equipment
- Encourage and create tranquil green spaces to improve mental health
- Work with partners to develop volunteer programmes in line with green gym activities

Case study: Town View Fields – improving the environment, working with partners

Working with the Friends of Nobles Rest and the South Cumbria Rivers Trust (SCRT) we are looking at options to allow for the introduction of a major flood alleviation project and improvements to biodiversity in the Town View Fields area of the park.

The SCRT is designing a scheme which opens an existing culvert and re-routing it to meander through Town View Field, with sections for water catchment and bog type planting. By doing this, storm/flood water progress through the park and on to the River Kent is slowed offering flood protection for the areas and properties downstream. The creation of wetland and river habitats will also provide the opportunity for the involvement of local community groups and school educational projects through the installation of pond dipping platforms and interpretation boards.

Town View Fields scheme is a flagship project and will be a smaller visual example of larger upland schemes SCRT are implementing.

In addition to this project the Friends group are planting wildflowers, have installed bird boxes and new planting to improve the biodiversity of the park

Housing and communities

“High quality parks where people meet and communities thrive”

We will create green spaces that make South Lakeland the best place to live work and explore, this will be achieved by:

- Develop and promote community involvement, forming strong partnerships with park users
- Use Park Management Plans and subsequent action plans to communicate, consult and listen to park users
- Improve perceptions of safety within parks e.g. improve sightlines into parks
- Reinforce local identity and civic pride
- Continue working with established groups e.g. friends groups, Bloom, Civic Society, town and parish councils etc.

Case study: Oxenholme Play Area – communities making play

Oxenholme lies on the edge of Kendal. The existing play area was worn, dated and provided little play value. The community of Oxenholme rallied together

and formed “Oxenholme Play Area Development,” (OPAD) a group of local parents with a drive to improve the play facilities for their children.

Working in partnership with SLDC the group successfully raised £60,000 and using SLDCs procurement process managed to refurbish some existing equipment, remove old tired equipment and install new play equipment which was exciting, engaging and offered play value for a greater age range of children.

An opening event was hosted on the playground by SLDC, OPAD and the playground provider which brought the community together. Working in partnership with the local community we are able to access further funding and provide facilities that meet the communities’ desires and needs.

Case study: Broadgate Meadow – promoting activity across all ages

At Broadgate Meadow, Grasmere, outdoor gym equipment was provided in partnership with the Grasmere Village Society, the focus of the equipment is for older people to enjoy gentle and varied exercise during a walk.

Case study: Lightburn Park – reclaiming the park for local people

At Lightburn Park, Ulverston, the Friends of Lightburn Park have worked hard to transform an underused park which had facilities relocated to the leisure centre and a reputation for antisocial behaviour. In five years a gardening club has been established which has made numerous improvements to the park, a MUGA has been installed and pathways improved to allow easier movement around the park. All of these improvements have created a park which is loved and well used, regular volunteer activities, including schools and a safe park for people of all ages and abilities to use and enjoy.

10.0 Delivery

“Ensuring we are equipped to provide the best, most effective and efficient service”

Delivering this strategy will take a committed effort from the council, our partners, community and volunteers operating within existing constraints and challenges which includes the best use of resources and budget.

Core works will continue to be delivered by the Grounds Maintenance Partnership, made up of SLDC and CLL. The partnership will continue to obtain value for money and make most efficient use of the contract’s resources. The current contract period expires on 31 March 2024, the strategy action plan details the appropriate timing for the retender process.

By working in effective partnerships with our communities and partners, elements of this strategy which are not day to day maintenance will be delivered. The Customer Connect programme will improve the way we work with communities and volunteers. The introduction of locality teams will develop stronger links with our park users, it will allow us to provide greater support and facilitate volunteer work parties on a more regular basis.

Greater community cohesion will be developed through improved community contact and continued support will be provided to achieve grant and other funding for projects and events.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy will be used to inform future work to be undertaken in respect of the South Lakeland Local Plan, specifically assessments that examine the accessibility, quality and quantity of Council's open space and recreational facilities within the South Lakeland Local Plan area. It also has a role to play in helping to inform future decisions regarding requirements arising from needs associated with new developments in terms of securing developer contributions to support planned investment.

11.0 Transfer of assets

With mounting pressure on resources and financial restraints on parks and open spaces the transfer of assets and land parcels (e.g. toilet blocks, buildings for concessions, structures, etc.) to community groups, town and parish council and other interested parties will only be considered if:

- There is community support for a transfer
- A strong business case is put forward for delivery of activities/services
- Supports the aims and priorities set out in the council plan
- Supports and aids delivery of the four key themes set out in this strategy
- Providers have capability and capacity in place to enable sustainable asset management/service delivery
- It meets the guidelines set out in the Asset Transfer Policy (see appendix 3)

Town and Parish Councils as well as strong community groups will play a leading role in the transformation of our parks and open spaces. The transfer and day to day running of the parks need to be evaluated on who would be most suitable to deliver these services most effectively and meeting the need of the community. Further information can be found in SLDC's Property and Land Management Strategy.

12.0 Commercial opportunities

Asset utilisation

It is accepted that access to parks and open spaces have a significant impact on those who choose to exercise and use the space for walking, relaxation, social meeting and leisure activities. Some of our open spaces have a specific additional leisure offer, such as the Glebe in Bowness. There is scope to consider whether further social and leisure activities could be developed on some sites that could benefit users and form part of a wider attraction to residents and visitors. It is proposed that a review of our current parks and open spaces, where we have a leisure offer already or may have an opportunity to develop

one will be undertaken, which will include the consideration of opportunities to generate an additional income to support the delivery of council services.

Events fees

Events on parks and open spaces are a key element to community inclusion and cohesion, they are a way of making our parks more exciting and attracting a more diverse range of users. Hosting a range of events involves considerable officer time and resources and it is considered appropriate that a range of fees and charges be implemented for the use of open spaces for commercial events. These would be used to offset the cost of administering such activities

and to reinvest in our open spaces. This could include a set admin fee for all events and an additional events fee for commercial activities which would depend on the projected number of attendees, ticket cost and return. A damage deposit will also be required to cover the cost of any reinstatement that may be required after the event. An assessment of the district's green spaces will be made to establish those most suited to events and what facilities may make them more acceptable for use.

Concessions

A review of existing concessions and future opportunities alongside the introduction of a policy would be beneficial in the progression of supporting local businesses to tender for existing and new concessions. With the introduction of a concessions policy SLDC could operate a fair, open and consistent approach, ensuring all concessions on SLDC land are of a high quality and 'good fit' with local needs and aspirations.

Income can be generated through a set admin fee and an annual or seasonal pitch fee which can be set depending on the desirability of the pitch, through a competitive tendering process we can ensure best value for money is achieved.

Partnerships

The strength of this strategy lies in the quality of the partnerships which will deliver all activity other than core grounds maintenance activities. Partnerships will be developed with key stakeholders and community groups to own management plans, achieve multiple grant funding and prioritise sustainable development projects.

Sponsorship

Introducing sponsorship and partnerships in our parks and open spaces is an effective way to raise a business profile in a positive way whilst supporting local communities and facilities.

By developing a sponsorship scheme SLDC can offer local businesses the opportunity to advertise as a partners in popular destinations around the district and to get involved in

projects on the ground. For example potential sponsorship sites include floral displays such as Baddeley Clock, Windermere, Nobles Rest, Kendal or key traffic islands. Using established models from other authorities sponsorship

agreements can last from one to five years, will include approved signage and opportunities to get involved in community projects with associated positive press coverage. Funds received through this type of partnership will be ring fenced for use in that locality, prioritised with the town or parish council and allocated to community projects to improve the surrounding park area.

SLDC currently offer a seat and tree donation scheme, for a fixed cost the public can fund a bench including a plaque to go in an agreed location, all donated benches become the property of the council and will be available for general use by visitors to the park. SLDC maintain and repair the benches for a period of 10 years and if they are still in good condition they may remain in position for longer.

Similarly SLDC offer an opportunity to donate a tree, for a fixed cost the public can fund an appropriate native species (the type will be at the discretion of the council). The fee will cover the cost of the tree, planting and maintenance and care for the first five years.

With the establishment of the Enjoy our Parks scheme, where partnerships and sponsorship opportunities are offered with improved advertising and marketing there is potential for more sustainable improvement projects and sponsorship of key features such as planting and street furniture.

Additional fees and charges

South Lakeland District Council currently do not charge for cemetery searches. Many other local authorities charge between £25 and £40 to carry out searches of the cemeteries register. This is something we can explore to incorporate in 2020/2021 fees and charges.

Currently SLDC offer a monthly playground inspection scheme to town and parish councils for a set fee, with a limited uptake, by re- evaluating the service offered alongside the playground management and improvement advice and lack of skills in the district and training and inspection package could be offered to our town and parish councils and further rolled out to commercial establishments with play facilities.

13.0 Setting priorities

The park, cemetery and woodland management plans and play audit will set priorities. The information gathered in the management plans will be used to highlight the green spaces most in need of investment/development and the associated action plans will be used to deliver sustainable improvements.

A “Parks Standard” scheme will be investigated along with established systems of monitoring e.g. Green Flag award or APSE’s Land Audit Management System. Once a suitable system of monitoring is in place the council will set priorities for

actions across all parks and update individual management plans in order to bring all our parks to a standard which meets the three key themes of this strategy. The adopted system will be key to monitoring the progress of delivering the strategy.

14.0 Monitoring and review

Progress will be monitored through continued engagement with our community groups, Town and Parish Councils and stakeholders.

Progress will be measured by the number of parks which meet and exceed the monitoring targets put in place and the number of actions met in the strategy action plan and individual management plans.

Progress will be monitored through the delivery of the action plan using SMART actions and in line with the park, cemetery and woodland management plans and play audit.

The strategy will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in the following ways:-

- Annually in accordance with the Council Plan
- Year three in preparation of grounds maintenance contract tender process
- Year five half way point

15.0 Action plan

Economy

No.	Item	Action	Target	Comment/monitor
1.1	Funding strategies	Identify funding opportunities for different aspects of park development.	Ongoing	
1.2	Concessions	Investigate benefits of successful concessions and identify suitable locations.	2020	
1.3	Volunteering	Create a volunteering programme, identify works, locations and delivery partners.	2021	
1.4	Sponsorship	Identify opportunities across the district for sponsorship and partnership opportunities using the brand.	Ongoing	
1.5	Grounds maintenance contract	Retender the grounds maintenance contract, to be operational from 1 April 2024.	2024	

Environment

No.	Item	Action	Target	Comment/monitor
2.1	Park standard	Create a “standard” which SLDC can aim to achieve for all parks and open spaces and bench mark against nationally.	2021	
2.2	Management plans	Create management plans for all parks, cemeteries and woodlands and use to set priorities. Implement plans.	2019	Bi-annual review
2.3	Cemeteries	Through the cemetery management plans review future planning options.	Ongoing	

People

No.	Item	Action	Target	Comment/monitor
3.1	Empowering People	Consult with the park users and forge partnerships to ensure the park meets the communities’ needs.	Ongoing	
3.2	Events	Work with specialist officer to establish a policy for events on the parks.	2021	
3.3	Play audit	Continue to work with community groups to deliver the play audit.	Ongoing	Review as required

Health and wellbeing

No.	Item	Action	Target	Comment/monitor
4.1	Healthy walks	Create a walking routes linking outdoor gym equipment and green spaces to encourage healthy lifestyles.	2022	
4.2	Use of gym equipment	Investigate the delivery of fitness classes using outdoor gym equipment and parks.	2021	
4.3	Physical and social inclusion	Accessibility, PiPA Standard for playgrounds.	2021	

Appendix 1: Overview of management plans

Principal parks

Site name	Highlights	Partners/stakeholders
Abbot Hall, Kendal	Destination park in the heart of Kendal, popular children's playground, beautiful riverside location, close to the high street and Abbot Hall Museum and Galleries.	Abbot Hall Museum, Abbot Hall Social Club, Kendal Parish Church, South Lakes Housing, Abbot Hall Bowling Club, Friends of Abbot Hall Playground, Kendal Town Council, Lakes Alive (Lake District National Park Authority).
Nobles Rest, Kendal	Peaceful park in a town centre location. Well used by people on their lunch breaks and by the local children's nurseries for play and picnicking.	Friends of Nobles Rest, Marks & Spencer's, St Thomas' Church, Town View Field Hostel, Kendal Town Council.
Kendal Castle, Kendal	Site of historic importance, popular with local dog walkers and visitors.	Cumbria County Council, Historic England, Kendal United Football Club, Netherfield Cricket Club, Kendal Town Council.
Bowness Prom & The Glebe	Popular location for tourists to admire the view of the Lakeland fells.	GLL, United Utilities, Windermere Lake Cruises, Taylors Fair, Windermere Town Council, Lake District National Park Authority.
Queens Park, Windermere	Valuable open space for the surrounding residents, varied sports facilities, popular dog walking location.	Windermere Football Club, Windermere Cricket Club, Windermere Bowling Club, Windermere Parks For All, Windermere Town Council.
Rothay Park, Ambleside	Destination park in the heart of the Lakes, provides access to the surrounding fells as well as a popular playground and picnic area.	Lakes Parish Council, Ambleside Primary School, Ambleside Football Club, Lake District National Park Authority.
Waterhead, Ambleside	Popular tourist location where visitors can admire the view of the Lakeland fells.	Windermere Lake Cruises', The Waterhead Coffee Shop, Lakes Parish Council.
Lightburn Park, Ulverston	Valuable open space for the local community, keen friends groups working hard to improve the park.	The Friends of Lightburn Park, The South Lakeland Model Engineering Society, Ulverston in Bloom.

Site name	Highlights	Partners/stakeholders
Ornamental Gardens, Grange	The gardens are popular with residents and visitors who enjoy seeing the rare duck breeds.	Grange Town Council, The 3Ps.
Park Road Gardens, Grange	With its bandstand and formal planting Park Road Gardens is in the style of a traditional park.	Grange Soroptimists, Grange Civic Society, Grange Town Council.
Grange Prom	Extends 1.5 miles from Lindale Road at the railway station to Yew Tree playing fields. Creates a pleasant stroll for visitors and local residents.	The Prom Gardeners, The Prom Café, Emma's Café, Grange Town Council, Grange Civic Society, National Rail.

Community parks

Site names	Highlights	Partners/stakeholders
Biskey Howe, Bowness	Once a Victorian view point, Biskey Howe offers beautiful views across Lake Windermere, recent tree works have opened this view up.	Windermere Town Council, Windermere & Bowness Civic Society.
Borrans Park, Ambleside	An area of historic importance due to the Roman Fort. Popular with picnickers due to its lakeside location.	Lakes Parish Council, Historic England, Lake District National Park Authority, The National Trust.
Broadgate Meadow, Grasmere	Community green space in the heart of the lakes, surrounded by stunning fells. Popular with dog walkers.	Lakes Parish Council, The Grasmere Village Society, Lake District National Park Authority.
Croftlands, Ulverston	Valuable green space in an urban environment. Popular park with football pitch and large play area for 0-16 year olds.	Ulverston Town Council, The Friends of Croftlands Resident Group.
Fletcher Park, Kendal	A quiet beauty spot set back from the centre of Kendal next to the castle. A peaceful park well loved by the surrounding residents.	Kendal Town Council, The Friends of Fletcher Park, Allotment holders

Site names	Highlights	Partners/stakeholders
Hallgarth, Kendal	A valuable open space in the centre of a large housing estate. With a large kick about area, modern playground and outdoor gym equipment it provides a well-used spaced for the local residents.	Kendal Town Council, Hallgarth Community Centre.
Hawesmead, Kendal	A small park well used and valued by the neighbouring properties.	Kendal Town Council.
Millerground, Bowness	A destination park with rare public access to the shore. It is soon to have a large playground, disabled access to the lake and pop up café. GLL water sports on site.	Millerground Enhancement Group (comprises of Windermere Town Council, Windermere & Bowness Civic Society, The National Trust, GLL and local residents & Councillors), United Utilities.
Rinkfield, Kendal	A valuable community park with a strong community group. Featuring outdoor gym equipment, a playground and large kick-about area.	Kendal Town Council, Rinkfield Residents Associations.
Sandylands, Kendal	Large green space in a built up area. Large playground, outdoor gym equipment and MUGA. Popular location for exercising dogs.	Kendal Town Council, Sandylands Residents Association.
Yew Tree playing fields, Grange	With beautiful views across the bay, Yew Tree playing fields have tennis courts, a football pitch and team and a playground soon to be renewed.	Grange Town Council, Grange Pre School, North Lonsdale Tennis Club, Grange Football Club, United Utilities.
Kendal West	Grouped together open spaces of value to the community.	Kendal Town Council, Historic England, Fellside Forum, Kendal Civic Society.
North East Kendal	Grouped together open spaces of value to the community.	Kendal Town Council, IBIS Football Club, Kendal Utd Football Club.

Site names	Highlights	Partners/stakeholders
North West Kendal	Grouped together open spaces of value to the community.	Kendal Town Council, Cumbria Woodlands.
South East Kendal	Grouped together open spaces of value to the community.	Kendal Town Council, The Beck Centre Community Group, Lancaster River and Canal Trust.
South Kendal	Grouped together open spaces of value to the community.	Kendal Town Council, Horticulture, Environment Agency.
South West Kendal	Grouped together open spaces of value to the community.	Kendal Town Council, Kirkbarrow Residents Association.
Windermere & Bowness	Grouped together open spaces of value to the community.	Windermere Town Council, Windermere Civic Society.
Cemeteries	Outlines locations of all cemeteries including closed. Explores options available for when space is full. Demonstrates relevant legislation and maintenance standards.	Town and parish councils, funeral directors, religious organisations, volunteers.

Appendix 2: Tree management policy

South Lakeland District Council Tree Management Policy - Draft

Introduction

Tree risk management

South Lakeland District Council has a statutory duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984 to ensure that the activities of the council do not put staff, contractors or members of the public at significant risk.

The risk of being struck and killed by a tree or branch falling is extremely low. The average risk is firmly in the “broadly acceptable” region of the tolerability of risk triangle published in HSE’s “Reducing Risks Protecting People”.

(www.hse.gov.uk 25-09-2015)

South Lakeland District Council is responsible for all the trees growing on land owned by the council and therefore has a statutory duty of care in relation to trees on this land.

Acceptable risk of harm

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE 2001) suggests that “an individual risk of death of one in a thousand per annum should on its own represent the dividing line between what could be just tolerable for any substantial category of workers for any large part of a working life, and what is unacceptable for any but fairly exceptional groups. For members of the public who have a risk imposed on them ‘in the wider interest of society’ this limit is judged to be an order of magnitude lower – at 1 in 10,000 per annum.”

Where the risk of harm is assessed as being greater than 1 in 10,000, South Lakeland District Council will make every effort to reduce the risk of harm to acceptable levels as soon as is reasonably practicable. Where numerous trees and sites are identified as presenting a risk of harm higher than 1 in 10,000, the required works will be prioritised to ensure the trees which present the highest risk are addressed first and subsequent trees managed in risk order until the risk of harm is reduced to less than 1 in 10,000.

How will South Lakeland District Council manage the risk presented by trees on its land?

South Lakeland District Council assesses the risk presented by trees on its land using the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment methodology to ascertain the risk of harm presented by a tree or trees upon site users and adjacent property (the ‘Target’ area). This risk assessment will inform the prioritisation of tree works to ensure the effective assignment of resources to maximise the reduction of risk that council trees present to site users. Trees which present the highest risk of harm will be prioritised to be felled or pruned first, with trees presenting a lower risk to be worked upon as budgets allow.

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment explained

Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) does not provide predictions of what will or will not happen. It provides an estimate of the risk from any particular tree hazard. QTRA provides a methodology for the probabilistic assessment of risks from falling trees or parts of trees. QTRA uses information on target area occupancy by pedestrians, vehicles or property to derive a target value. The size of the part of the tree which would impact upon the target area is measured and used in the calculation. The probability of failure of the part is then assessed based on known defects and the experience of the surveyor observing similar defects. A risk index score is calculated and converted into a Risk of Harm. The risk of harm is shown as a probability, such as 1 in 1,000 or 1 in 1,000,000.

In most cases the risk of harm presented by a tree is very low when compared to other risks in everyday life. Each year between five and six people in the UK are killed when trees or branches fall on them. Around three people are killed each year by trees in public spaces. Thus the risk of being struck and killed by a tree or branch falling is extremely low (in the

order of one in 10 million for those trees in or adjacent to areas of high public use).

Tree maintenance

South Lakeland District Council seeks to manage its trees for the wider benefit of the residents of South Lakeland and visitors to the area. As trees grow, there is the possibility that they will cause a conflict with their surroundings. This may take the form of roots breaking up a footpath or cycleway, branches overhanging a footpath or displacing a structure such as a wall.

South Lakeland District Council will carry out works required to prevent a statutory nuisance. In every case, the cause of any damage must be directly attributable to the tree proposed for works, and the works to be carried out will be determined by the council's Arboriculturist and be appropriate to abate the identified and foreseeable damage. Additional specialist opinions may be required to substantiate the reasons for the work such as a camera survey for drainage complaints or a structural engineers report for works required to abate damage to a building or wall.

South Lakeland District Council will also carry out works required to comply with an act of parliament (such as the Highways Act 1980).

South Lakeland District Council will not carry out works to trees for any of the following reasons:

- Trees blocking views
- Trees blocking TV or satellite reception
- Trees shading gardens or dwellings
- Seasonal events such as leaf and blossom fall, pollen, fruit fall, honey-dew deposition from aphids, bird roosting or nesting
- Tree branches touching telephone lines

Pro-active tree maintenance and management

Where budget constraints permit, proactive tree management works will be carried out by the council. This work will seek to reduce the future management costs to the council and prevent defects developing into actionable risks. In most cases, pro-active management works will be ordered where risk reduction work is commissioned on the same site in order to save costs to the council.

The council also support adjacent landowners to carry out works to trees where permitted under Common Law, such as pruning back branches which overhang their property. The council strongly suggest that landowners who wish to carry out such work contact the council so checks on the Tree Preservation Order and Conservation Area status of the trees can be carried out. The council would also strongly suggest a qualified and insured tree surgeon carry out the works to British Standard BS3998 2010 (or any subsequent updates).

Extreme weather events

Seasonal extreme weather events can cause significant disruption to infrastructure. Falling trees can add to this disruption. It is widely acknowledged that trees with no visible defects can be uprooted or snapped in extreme weather. During periods of extreme weather it is recommended that people refrain from entering woodland or parkland. In the hours and days following extreme weather, users of council woodlands and parklands should exercise caution and be aware of their surroundings. People should avoid walking under fallen trees or broken branches. The council's grounds maintenance operators will assess the council's high use public sites and action any remedial works required. This may include restricting access into some sites until the risk can be reduced to acceptable levels.

Disposal of felled trees

The council seek to manage its trees in such a way as to minimise transportation costs and reduce the carbon footprint of its operations. This includes the disposal of lumber, branch wood and woodchip. Where possible wood, brash and chip will be left on site and stacked neatly. Deadwood provides many ecosystem benefits for wildlife, fungi and invertebrates. Only where there is insufficient space on the site, the site is of an ornamental nature or it is otherwise unsuitable for the wood and chip to be left on site, wood and chip will be removed from the site by the council's Arboricultural Contractor.

Assessments of trees on council land

The council will assess the risk presented by trees on its land on a regular basis. The initial assessment of risk presented by trees will be made by the zoning of target areas. This will be followed by walkover tree risk assessments for high value target areas. Once assessments of high target use sites are completed, this will be followed by assessment of medium value target zones and then low value target zones. Where a more detailed assessment of tree risk is identified by the walkover assessments, this will be carried out by the council's appointed Arboriculturist.

Risk assessment details will be recorded on a GIS layer. Over time a record of all council sites containing trees will be compiled.

Appendix 3: Asset Transfer Policy

SLDC policy for the transfer of assets on a non-commercial basis

Aim

The aim of this Asset Transfer Policy is to provide a set of guidelines to be considered in the transfer of assets from SLDC to other bodies where the transfer is on a non-commercial basis. In implementing this policy the council will have regard to its powers to transfer assets without the need to achieve best consideration as provided for under Circular 06/03: Local Government Act 1972 general disposal consent (England) 2003 disposal of land for less than the best consideration that can reasonably be obtained.

The policy also outlines the mechanism to be used in such transfers.

Types of asset

Examples of the types of assets that have been transferred by other Authorities to the community include:

- Village Halls
- Theatres
- Land (playing fields, allotments, parks)
- Office Space
- Museum Buildings

In the case of SLDC the assets could include toilets, tennis courts, fishing rights or indeed any council asset that it is deemed appropriate.

Guidelines

The Big Society philosophy provides the background to this policy. The Government's Big Society is about achieving goals in ways which are more diverse, more local and more personal. The council fully embraces 'localism'. This is not just because of the Localism Act. However the Act provides tools to help the progress of localism; new rights such as the Right to Bid and the Right to Challenge Services for example.

Localism is already working in South Lakeland in many ways with active contributions from people in voluntary work and emerging examples of various service providers. The council wants to build on this enhancing localism through greater decentralisation to reduce bureaucracy, empowerment of communities, diversification of how services are provided and enabling greater public scrutiny and accountability.

In response to the new national, regional and local agendas the council has produced a five year strategic plan to ensure that the council is in a long term sustainable position to deliver its vision and priorities. The strategy encompasses work to be delivered across three key themes:

- One South Lakeland – a partnership approach to achieving priorities
- Localism – working together with our communities
- A Sustainable Council – delivering value for money services

Delivery of the activity detailed in the strategy is creating a new approach to the role of the council and its involvement with communities. As we deliver the strategy, the council is taking significant steps towards being an enabling organisation.

The criteria listed below provide a framework for the consideration of an asset transfer.

1. Asset that are of strategic importance to the council will not be considered for transfer. The strategic importance will vary from case to case but the contribution of the Asset to the council finances and the impact on the council's ability to deliver strategic objectives are key considerations.

2. Using a strict definition an asset is something that provides, or is capable of providing an income. This can be broadened for the purposes of this policy to include assets that may provide a benefit even if this is not in monetary form.
3. In many cases council properties do not provide an income but attract costs in upkeep and maintenance. By a strict definition these are in fact liabilities. As a principle therefore the council will also look for opportunities to transfer liabilities to other parties as part of an overall approach to transfers involving a package of assets and liabilities. In this case the proportion of assets and liabilities and the balance of the financial impact are important considerations.
4. Although the transfers being considered in this context are on a non-commercial basis it is prudent to consider the impact on the council of the transfer. The preparation of a business case in the same way as for commercial transfers is a useful way of assessing this impact. Consideration should be given to the benefits of the transfer to the council. These benefits could be in the form of enhanced partnership working, improved community relations, reputation enhancement or be a means to unlock asset potential for the benefit of the community. The potential negative impacts should also be considered. The community may see the transfer as an abdication of responsibility. Even though the transfer is on a non-commercial basis the financial implication should also be considered, in particular hidden costs or opportunity costs arising as a result of the transfer.
5. The capability of the community or body to which it is proposed to transfer the asset should also be considered. Is there a good understanding of the implications of asset responsibility and appetite to manage the asset. The track record is also important. The legal basis of the entity taking responsibility for the asset is also a consideration.
6. The level of support the community or body taking on the asset will need is an important consideration. This may be short term during the transfer or longer term and is part of the potential hidden costs mentioned in 4 above. The council should be mindful of identifying a clear exit strategy at an early stage in the process so that all parties are aware of the end result and appreciate fully the implications. Consideration should also be given to how a worst case scenario is to be handled. For example the council may wish to take back the asset if the project fails. The long term liabilities in this situation need to be considered.
7. The benefit to the community should be assessed and quantified if possible. The transfer may be part of a package of measures to assist in community development. The guiding principle here should be that the community can identify and buy into the benefit, for example if the possession of an asset allows them to attract funding. In some instances there may not be a benefit as in when the transfer is of a liability.
8. This policy covers a broad range of potential transfers of both assets and liabilities. There are therefore likely to be many technical issues involved ranging from physical maintenance, to planning implications as well as legal HR and equality issues. All of these should be considered in the same way as for any council decision.
9. A full risk analysis should be carried out and controls identified for the significant risks where possible.

10. Whilst this policy deals with the transfer of assets at less than open market value it does not automatically assume that the transfer is at zero value. In practice a range of discounted values may be applied ranging from a nominal amount to a significant percentage of open market value. As a minimum the council should seek to recover its transaction costs, for example legal and surveyor fees.

Mechanism

A key aspect of the transfer is whether it is to be a one off permanent disposal or transfer by way of a long lease. The former offers a clean break with complete transfer of responsibility but it also means the council loses all practical control of the eventual use of the asset.

A long lease arrangement provides all of the benefits of a complete disposal in practical terms but it allows for the council to retain some control of the asset in the longer term by way of restrictive covenants.

In practice there may be situations where either approach may be the most appropriate. The council should decide on its preferred model as a starting point while allowing for consideration of alternative approaches in particular circumstances.

Each case will need to be considered on its own merits and the decision process should follow the normal process for council decisions in accordance with the council's constitution.